

so conceited (or untruthful) as to state that accidents with 606 occur only in Europe; that we in California never allow such things to happen.

R. B.

### ON MAKING BOOKS.\*

"Intemperantia litteratum laboramus," groans Seneca. "We are suffering from a plague of literature," translates Father Barry. This is a complaint we may echo in our own day. Everybody is writing or threatens to write or is chidden for not writing. But worse than that, everybody is being written about. The market is full of "Who's Who's"—literary, scientific, theatrical, religious, etc., amplifying from year to year so regularly that inclusion in them has ceased to imply distinction, while omission from them will soon come to denote overwhelming modesty or densest obscurity.

Despite Seneca's complaint that his contemporaries wrote too much, posterity feels that it has received too little. We are left in that frame of mind the production of which, the elder Mr. Weller declared, is the great art of letter-writing; we wish there were more of it. Such a void Dr. Kelly seeks by the work before us to spare "medical generations yet unborn." His object is to supply a want which he himself had felt in the course of his biographical labors.

In its compilation he has spent five years. The great value of Professor Kelly's time is a matter of common knowledge and those who are interested in medical biography owe him their gratitude for the zeal with which he has devoted himself to this avocation.

The faults of the book the compiler himself indicates in his preface. The biographies are lacking in uniformity of style and treatment, a lack for which a diversity of excellence would have compensated us. But many of the lives are uninteresting and the data supplied are trivial. It is admitted that in some instances "relatively unimportant men receive a more extended notice than their worthier compeers," but Dr. Kelly had neither time nor inclination to remedy this defect. Among the more than twelve hundred "worthies" included in the Cyclopedia many seem to us of no consequence whatever. Some of them are men "who have done no special original work but who attained great *local* prominence." It is this numerous body of prominent citizens, pointed to with pride and indiscriminating good nature by Americans, and by others pointed at with derision before and since Martin Chuzzlewit, that create the impression that everybody who does not studiously withdraw from observation is likely to be embraced in the capacious biographical literature of to-day. Presumably to his local prominence, one Philip Greth Smith (1810-1879) owes his place in this Cyclopedia; it is recorded of him that "In 1850 he purchased the rights of Lebanon County for

'Coads' Patent Graduated Galvanic Battery,' and thereafter confined his practice almost exclusively to chronic diseases." We hope we do the deceased Smith no wrong if we base upon this statement the suspicion that he was very like a quack. Of course a cyclopedia is not necessarily a roll of honor, and the presence of a name in it does not connote merit, although Dr. Kelly calls his work "a modest Hall of Fame." It is for the murder he committed and not for his scholarship, that Eugene Aram's memory is perpetuated in the encyclopedias. But there must be a limit somewhere to comprehensiveness, for too large a multitude of the unworthy and unimportant obscure our view of those worthier of our attention.

Of practitioners in California we may mention the biographical notices of Levi C. Lane, Elias Samuel Cooper and R. Beverly Cole. The life of Cooper was written by Dr. Emmet Rixford and is an excellent example of what such a sketch should be, for the deeds of the man which illustrate his spirit are most vividly recorded.

The omission of a biography of George Chismore is a defect in this work as reprehensible as many of its inclusions. He was not only "locally prominent," but his skill with the lithotrite and his improvements of that instrument were recognized throughout the nation. In his character there was an association of most attractive and endearing traits, in his career there was variety of scene, there were adventures ashore and afloat, among barbarous tribes and in the great centers of culture; his versatility was exhibited in his skill as a huntsman and in the beauty of his poetry—surely an ideal subject for a most picturesque biography, and one that should be inserted into Dr. Kelly's Cyclopedia if a new edition presents an opportunity for introducing it.

### REMEMBER!

Protection by the State Medical Society

### PROTECTS!

Does An Insurance Policy Really Protect?

THINK IT OVER

\* A Cyclopedia of American Medical Biography, comprising the Lives of Eminent Deceased Physicians and Surgeons from 1610 to 1910. By Howard A. Kelly, M. D. Illustrated with Portraits, 2 vols. W. B. Saunders Company, Philadelphia and London, 1912. \$10 net.